

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: JANUARY 4, 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS	TESSIER	REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:
	O'CONNOR	ROBERT PHELPS, COMMISSIONER
	BENTLEY	MICHAEL JABAUT, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE
	KENNY	SERVICES
	THOMAS	DOUG HERSCHLEB, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
	STRAINER	KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER
		PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY
COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:		HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL
SUPERVISOR	SHEEHAN	SERVICES
		JOAN SADY, CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
		SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY
		TAYLOR
		TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
		AMANDA ALLEN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:12 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the November 30, 2007 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members. *A copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Beginning with the Pending Items portion of the agenda, Mr. Phelps advised that the relocation of the Medicaid staff to the CNA Building in Glens Falls was being planned for the weekend of January 19th through the 22nd, which was a three-day holiday weekend. He noted that the hardware necessary to support the State network had already been installed and the pulling of cable and electrical wiring to the spaces needed would occur over the following two weekends in preparation for occupation by the Medicaid staff. Mr. Phelps noted that the installation of the necessary telecommunications lines would begin on January 9th and he added that the leasing agreement had already been signed and was in place. He said that they were now in the process of making plans for the moving of files, filing cabinets, desks and shelving units. Mr. Phelps stated that it was his plan to have the Medicaid staff pack all of the active files, of which there was a significant volume, for relocation to the CNA Building. He added that over the course of the holiday weekend, they planned to move the files, workstations, shelving, file cabinets and such to the new location, allowing for the Medicaid staff to return to work on January 22nd at the CNA Building, where they would

begin unpacking the files and organizing the office.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the actual moving would be done by County staff or by an independent moving company and Mr. Phelps replied that he was currently researching this to determine which was a more cost effective option and if there was sufficient staff available to facilitate the move on an in-house basis. Mr. Phelps noted that no matter which option was chosen, the costs of the move were 100% reimbursable. He pointed out that although his staff would certainly be responsible for packing the active Medicaid files, as well as their personal items, the office furniture, such as desks, shelving and filing cabinets, required disassembly before they could be moved.

Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, advised that many of the workstations used by the Medicaid staff were very large and could not be disassembled completely because many were glued and made of pressed wood. He added that the Buildings & Grounds staff were reviewing the size of the workstations to determine if they would even fit into the elevator. Mr. Payne said that the moving services offered at State contract pricing were through a Brockport, NY based company and they were in the process of gaining a quotation for the costs of the move. In conclusion, Mr. Payne advised, he would be meeting with Mr. Phelps and other involved staff on the following Monday to determine whether the move would be done on an in-house basis or contracted to an independent company.

Mr. Tessier asked if the costs of the move would still be 100% reimbursable if it was done on an in-house basis and Mr. Phelps replied affirmatively, noting that the costs of the move, as well as the costs of the moving truck that would have to be rented, would need to be billed to DSS for reimbursement through the Medicaid program. Mr. O'Connor asked if the Brockport, NY based company was the only moving company listed on State contract and Mr. Phelps replied affirmatively, noting that if they chose to use this company they would also have to pay for the company's travel from their home location to Warren County. Mr. Phelps added that they were working with Julie Pacyna, Purchasing Agent, to determine the best option for the move based on the fiscal aspect.

Mr. Kenny stated that he wished to compliment everyone involved in planning and subsequently facilitating the move of the Medicaid staff to the CNA Building. He said that although the move had been decided upon and would be completed in a short period of time, they had done a wonderful job in bringing it to realization. Mr. Kenny said that he felt the Medicaid staff would be very appreciative of the efforts provided also, as well as their new location.

Proceeding with the agenda review, Mr. Phelps advised that item one referred to an analysis of Child Protective Service (CPS) staffing and overtime. He reminded the Committee members that in a prior Personnel/Human Resources Committee meeting the three additional CPS positions requested had been approved and funded; however, he said, it had been determined that the positions should not be filled until an analysis of overtime costs had been performed in relation to the possibility of reducing such costs by adding staff. Mr. Phelps stated that the agenda included a memo which reviewed the issue in great detail and also included notation that the matter had been reviewed by the Social Services Committee in June and July of 2007. He added that the minutes of both Committee meetings were also included for the Committee's review.

Mr. Phelps recalled that in July of 2007, as per the minutes included in the agenda, the Committee had determined that the after-hours CPS activities were very cost effective as they were utilizing existing staff to cover any events occurring after normal business hours. He explained that there were always two staff members on call after hours, one caseworker and one supervisor, for which an allowance of \$20 per weeknight, or \$30 per day for weekends and holidays, was paid. Mr. Phelps advised that the agenda included a spreadsheet reflecting the costs of the on-call allowance and the overtime costs incurred for after-hours reports to be \$47,000 annually, which was significantly less than it would be to implement another shift of employees to perform the same services.

Mr. Phelps apprised that although statistics showed that the majority of CPS reports were made during normal business hours, after-hours coverage was necessary because they were required to immediately respond to any calls to the Central Registry, regardless of the time they were made. He pointed out that the agenda included a pie graph which reflected that 70% of all reports were made during normal business hours, with only a relatively small number occurring over weekends and holidays, and even fewer during periods closely surrounding work hours. In light of this, Mr. Phelps stated, extending the current shifts would have minimal impact on the associated costs and would only pull staff away from the shifts most conducive to performing investigations. He advised that the majority of CPS investigations were performed during normal business hours because that was when Courts, schools, doctor's offices and such were in operation, allowing for investigation activities. To try and extend investigation hours beyond normal business hours would not be prudent, he added, as the majority of the work done by the CPS caseworkers was of an investigative nature and was best done during normal business hours.

Mr. Geraghty entered the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

As a result of being understaffed, Mr. Phelps apprised, additional overtime costs were being incurred by staff attempting to work on the backlog of CPS cases accumulated. He said that there were staff who were unable to complete reports in a timely fashion and unable to respond to reports as a result of under-staffing and this was the driving force behind his request for the additional CPS Caseworker positions. Mr. Phelps advised that he had performed an analysis of overtime costs incurred as it related to the CPS backlog cases which reflected that over the past twelve months CPS employees had accumulated 254 hours of overtime, equating to \$8,000 annually. He noted that with the new staffing in place these costs should be eliminated, therefore savings in overtime costs would be realized. Mr. Phelps stated that it was his belief that the current procedures used allowed the CPS staff to provide the services necessary in the most cost effective way possible.

Mr. Payne noted that by maintaining two on-call staff members for after-hours reports they were accumulating costs in the area of \$660 for every two-week period. He asked how often these staff members were called upon for after-hours investigation concurrently and if the on-call staff could be reduced to one employee for cost savings. Mr. Phelps reiterated that two staff members were required as one was a Caseworker and the second was a CPS Supervisor who was responsible for directing the Caseworker on the course of action necessary to investigate any abuse or neglect reports and to make an initial risk assessment in any report. He explained that each case required an

imminent need risk assessment which had to be reviewed and supervised, leading to the need for both a Caseworker and a CPS Supervisor for after-hours reports. Mr. Payne suggested that it might be acceptable to keep only the Caseworker on call after-hours with the direction that he/she should contact the CPS Supervisor with respect to the case during normal business hours. Mr. Phelps replied that although the Caseworker may not need to contact the CPS Supervisor on all cases, the Supervisor had to be available for contact in the event that their assistance was required. Mr. Phelps added that typically the CPS Supervisor did not accumulate overtime as it was the Caseworker who responded to the majority of CPS reports. Mr. Tessier asked if this arrangement was mandated by the State and Mr. Phelps replied affirmatively.

Mr. Payne asked how many CPS Supervisors were currently on staff and Doug Herschleb, Director of Services, advised that the responsibility of being on-call for after-hours supervisory contact was rotated between one CPS Supervisor, a Senior CPS Caseworker and two other very experienced CPS Caseworkers. He added that Caseworkers contacted their supervisors on all calls for distinct direction and it was very important that the proper supervision remain in place. Mr. Phelps pointed out that many of the on-call Caseworkers were not necessarily CPS Caseworkers, but rather Adult Care, Preventive Care or Foster Care and Adoption Caseworkers, therefore they had received a lower level of training than CPS Caseworkers and required additional supervision.

Mr. Geraghty asked if the after-hours operation could be staffed such that only one CPS Supervisor was on-call each day to save funds and Mr. Phelps replied that the costs of doing such would be considerably more than they were currently. In addition, Mr. Phelps noted, if they were to use only a CPS Supervisor for after-hours reports, they would be overrun very quickly because there were not enough supervisory positions in existence to handle the burden of the after-hours reports.

Mr. Kenny pointed out that Mr. Phelps' report reflected that over the period commencing November 1, 2007 and terminating December 11, 2007 only 35 after-hours calls had been received, which was roughly one per day. Mr. Geraghty asked why they should not consider instituting positions, not necessarily supervisory, which would be qualified enough to make a determination in any CPS after-hours call so that only one person had to be on-call rather than two. Mr. Phelps replied that although one person was responsible for making the decision in the case, which was in many cases the Caseworker, the CPS Supervisor had to be available for direction in the event that the supervisory support was necessary.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. O'Connor stated that it was important to remember that calls to the Central Registry could be made on hearsay, rather than based on fact. He said that the volume of calls was increasing in light of new laws intended to reduce child abuse occurrences and consequently it appeared that the proper amount of staff was not in place to appropriately respond. Mr. O'Connor said that the bottom line seemed to be that regardless of the volume of calls, they were required to address them and an appropriate amount of staff was necessary to do so.

Mr. Thomas thanked Mr. Phelps for bringing his analysis back to the Committee. He noted that he had been one of the Personnel/Human Resources Committee members that had requested the information and he apologized for not remembering that this information had been covered in previous Committee meetings.

Mr. Kenny asked if the authorization to fill the three vacant positions required referral back to the Personnel/Human Resources Committee and Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, advised that it was her understanding that if the Committee was in agreement with the justification given they could authorize the filling of the positions in question, which were as follows:

- 1) Senior Caseworker, base salary \$34,564 (*newly created position*);
- 2) Caseworker, base salary \$33,590 (*newly created position*);
- 3) Caseworker, base salary \$33,590 (*newly created position*);
- 4) Caseworker, base salary \$33,590 (*vacated due to promotion*).

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. O'Connor and carried unanimously to authorize Mr. Phelps to fill all four positions as listed above. *Copies of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position forms are on file with the minutes.*

Moving on to agenda item number two, Mr. Phelps reminded the Committee that during the prior month's meeting the Committee had authorized him to fill an Intake Clerk position without bringing the request to the Personnel/Human Resources Committee based on the circumstance that the position was vacant due to a resignation during the probationary period. He advised that he now faced a similar situation in that another Intake Clerk had been terminated during the probationary period and he was requesting permission to fill the position without the consent of the Personnel/Human Resources Committee.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the Intake Clerk position as outlined above.

Mr. Phelps advised that agenda item number three referred to a request to reclassify two Account Clerk positions to Senior Account Clerk Positions. He explained that although the Committee had been favorable of his request to reclassify the positions when presented during the prior year, it had subsequently been determined inappropriate to reclassify them at that time because both of the employees filling them were still within the probationary period. Mr. Phelps stated that the probationary term had since come to an end, with both employees successfully passing the Civil Service testing for the Senior Account Clerk position. He noted that the positions had been funded at the Senior Account Clerk classification level for 2008 and he requested that the reclassifications be made effective January 1, 2008.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the request to reclassify two Account Clerk positions to Senior Account Clerk effective January 1, 2008, as outlined above and refer same to the Personnel/Human Resources Committee. *Copies of both requests are on file with the minutes.*

Agenda item number four, Mr. Phelps stated, was a request to reclassify an Intake Coordinator position (*Grade 15*) to that of a Senior Welfare Examiner position (*Grade 11*) effective March 1, 2008, upon the retirement of the current Intake Coordinator. He noted that the impending retirement was that of a long-term employee who had been primarily responsible for coordination of the welfare systems management data. Mr. Phelps apprised that this retirement, along with the move of Medicaid staff to the CNA Building, would allow him to reassign systems-related duties to his Staff Development Coordinator, thereby allowing for the Intake Coordinator position to be reclassified to a lower grade Senior Welfare Examiner position. He explained that because the majority of the work performed by the position would be pre-screening of prospective clients, a supervisory position with program knowledge would be more appropriate. Mr. Phelps stated that there would be savings incurred from this reclassification due to the significant difference in base salary between the positions.

Mr. Kenny asked if the person chosen to fill the reclassified Senior Welfare Examiner Position would be working out of title by performing duties previously managed by the Intake Coordinator and Mr. Phelps replied in the negative, explaining that the job responsibilities fulfilled previously by the Intake Coordinator were being shifted to the Staff Development Coordinator, leaving only the duties appropriate for the Senior Welfare Examiner.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. O'Connor and carried unanimously to approve the request to reclassify the position of Intake and Data Coordinator (*Grade 15*) to that of a Senior Welfare Examiner (*Grade 11*) effective March 1, 2008, as outlined above, and refer same to the Personnel/Human Resources Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Continuing with the agenda review, Mr. Phelps advised that the fifth agenda item pertained to a request to amend the 2008 County Budget and the salary schedule to increase the salaries for both Assistant County Attorneys working in the DSS from \$53,552 to \$56,741. Paul Dusek, County Attorney, explained that the salary received by Amy Bartlett, Assistant County Attorney, was split evenly between DSS and the Law Department, as she performed services for both Departments. He apprised that the salary discrepancy was partially his error, as he had requested salary increases for the Assistant County Attorneys in his Office but had not notified Mr. Phelps of their approval; therefore, the increase had not been included in the DSS Budget for Ms. Bartlett's salary. Mr. Dusek added that in fairness, the salary of the second Assistant County Attorney, working solely for DSS, should also receive the salary increase in order to maintain the same salary received by the other Assistant County Attorneys.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the 2008 Budget and adjust the salary schedule by increasing the salaries for both Assistant County Attorneys working with the DSS from \$53,552 to \$56,741 and refer same to the Personnel/Human Resources and Finance Committees. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps stated that agenda item number six pertained to the notice of a food stamp bonus award. He explained that due to the State's ability to reduce its food stamp certification error rate, the

Federal Government had awarded the State bonus monies which were being offered to each County district. Mr. Phelps said that Warren County had been offered an additional \$25,000 which would be awarded subsequent to the submission of a detailed plan of use; he added that one of the contingencies of the award was that it could not be used to supplant an existing cost. He noted that the DSS would be facing growing workloads because in addition to an increase in food stamp certification as the result of the State's efforts to increase the number of recipients for food stamp benefits, the Committee had previously approved the DSS's entering into a project with the State to begin imaging files. Mr. Phelps suggested that the additional \$25,000 would be best used to support the salary needs for the imaging process, which would be facilitated by the addition of two temporary Clerks, for use in the food stamp and Medicaid program areas. He advised that there would be no cost to the County for either temporary clerical position as one would be funded by the additional food stamp monies and the other was 100% reimbursable through the Medicaid program.

Mr. O'Connor asked if it might be possible to hire DSS clients to provide the services required and Mr. Phelps replied that this was a possibility as there were people currently involved with the DSS work project programs that could be reviewed for consideration in filling the temporary positions.

Mr. Payne asked if the salary costs for the temporary positions would exceed the \$25,000 awarded through the food stamp program and Mr. Phelps replied in the negative, explaining that only one of the positions would be funded by these monies while the costs of the other would be fully reimbursable through the Medicaid program where it would be implemented.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the positions requested would include a probationary period and Mr. Phelps replied in the negative, noting that the positions would not be subject to the probationary terms as they were temporary. Mr. Phelps added that although the positions would be required for one-year there might be the need to break employment after six months to maintain the nature of a temporary position; however, he said, he would discuss this further with Richard Kelly, Personnel Officer, to determine if this was necessary.

Discussion ensued with respect to the matter.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to authorize the creation of the two temporary clerical positions as requested and refer same to the Personnel/Human Resources and Finance Committees. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

The final agenda item, Mr. Phelps apprised, was for the Committee's information only and he explained that there were two additional vacancies within his Department. He advised that the first was a position previously filled by a 15-year employee in the Employment Unit who recently retired and the second was a Medicaid Examiner position which was vacant due to a resignation. Mr. Phelps stated that he was currently assessing the needs to fill both positions and would address the Committee with his recommendation at their next meeting. In addition, he advised, he wanted the Committee to be aware that there were five positions with pending reclassification reviews based on the employee's request. Mr. Phelps said that four of the positions under review were within the

Resource Unit, those being a Resource Assistant, two Typists and a Senior Typist, all of which had been reviewed by State Civil Service representatives. He noted that Civil Service had made recommendations for title changes on each, which he would present to the Committee at their next meeting. Mr. Phelps added that the remaining positions being considered were within the Daycare and Medicaid programs, and if the decision was made to reclassify these positions, there would be no fiscal impact to the County.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the reclassification review process was conducted through the Human Resources Department or the Civil Service Department and Mr. Phelps replied that although the review was performed by the Civil Service Department, he had updated Todd Lunt, Human Resources Director, with regard to the issue because it was his opinion that Mr. Lunt should be knowledgeable of the review process, as well. Mr. Lunt interjected that the recommendation for reclassification was made through a review of job specifics performed by a State Civil Service representative who then advised Mr. Kelly of their recommendation and Mr. Kelly would either agree or disagree, at which point Mr. Phelps would present all findings to the Committee.

Mr. Tessier asked Mr. Phelps if this review would conclude any issues with regard to employees working out of title and Mr. Phelps replied affirmatively. He added that although these were the only reclassification issues he was currently aware of, he could not be certain that future staff would not make the same challenge based on their feeling that they were working out of title.

Mr. Phelps apprised that he had included a document comparing staffing changes in all Departments for the years 1996 and 2007 in the agenda to reflect how little the DSS staffing had increased in comparison to most other Departments over the past ten years. He said that although he was sure that the increases in each Department were justified, over the past ten years the DSS staff had increased only 8.4% to include ten additional positions. Mr. Phelps directed the Committee members to the second page of the document which reflected statistical information with regard to increases in workloads over the same period. He pointed out that the Medicaid workload had increased by 62.5%, while those in the Food Stamp area had increased by 36.6%. Mr. Phelps noted that there had been a decreased workload in only one area, that being in Temporary Assistance, which his staff had worked very hard to keep at the lowest levels ever seen by Warren County, allowing for staff to be deployed to other Departments in 1998. Mr. Phelps stated that there had also been tremendous growth in the HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program), Preventive Services to Families and Child Support Collection areas. He concluded that although there had been a huge increase in the number of individuals seeking assistance, his Department had met those demands with a very limited increase in staffing.

Mr. O'Connor noted that throughout the Board of Supervisors there had been a prevalent feeling that all of the County Departments needed to do more work with less staffing. He said that although other Departments were also doing so, DSS was certainly meeting this adage now, as they had in the past, and he felt that was something to be commended.

Mr. Payne stated that he had been looking into the number of people visiting the DSS Building for

security purposes and it had been very hard to determine exactly how many people were visiting the building because accurate records of visitors were not kept. He said that he had spoken with Shane Ross, Chief Deputy, and it had been determined that the Security Guards at the DSS Building were willing to maintain an accurate sign-in process for visitors, as they did at the secured entrances of the Municipal Center. Mr. Payne suggested that a similar process to that used in the Municipal Center should be instituted so that in the event of a fire or other catastrophic event it would be known how many visitors were in the building at any given time. Mr. Phelps interjected that anyone in the DSS Building would be known as all visitors were either contained in the Reception Area or were escorted to another office by a DSS employee where they would be accounted for. He added that logs of individuals entering the building and going beyond the reception area were kept by DSS employees. Mr. Payne countered that the log was nowhere near as accurate as it should be and Mr. Kenny added that because there were several different logs it was difficult to determine exactly who was in the Building in the event of an emergency. Mr. Kenny stated that he did not see any issue with having the Security Guard maintain a master listing of the visitors entering and leaving the DSS Building. Mr. Phelps stated that his only concern in this matter would be confidentiality of the list and he suggested that the list be kept in an electronic format that could be typed in without subsequent visitors seeing the list, if they chose to implement another procedure. He noted that at this point the list was kept by the employee working in the reception area and could not be viewed by other visitors.

Mr. Tessier asked if a Security Guard would be in place at the Medicaid Office being relocated to the CNA Building and Mr. Phelps replied in the negative. Mr. Phelps added that they would start off with only surveillance cameras and would further assess the need for a Security Guard once the Office was in operation.

Discussion ensued with respect to the matter.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Bentley, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda M. Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist